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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR DECEMBER 16, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for December 16, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

HURRIYET / ZAMAN: Land Forces Army Commander General Yasar Buyukanit, who was invited to Washington by the U.S. Army Command, pointed out during a speech he made in Washington that the PKK is not on NATO's terrorist organizations list.

RADIKAL: General Yasar Buyukanit, who was criticized in a report prepared by the Turkish Parliament's Human Rights Commission on the Semdinli case, said that he was really curious about whether a probe was ever conducted following the incidents.

CUMHURİYET / HURRIYET / RADIKAL: Van Centennial University rector has been acquitted of the charges against him for not officially declaring and registering historical artifacts he allegedly kept possession of, because of lack of evidence. The artifacts seized by the police will be returned to Askin. The newspaper separately noted that six hours at the Court Hall reportedly caused Askin to end up with cardiac arrhythmia and high blood pressure.

HURRIYET / CUMHURİYET: YOK(Higher Education Board) Chairman Erdogan Tezic, in a press announcement, said that the venue of Yucel Askin's and eight other defendants' trial should be changed to enable a secure and fair trial. Tezic further pointed out that the methods the court applied and its jurisdiction capacity were not even discussed during the trial. The newspaper separately noted that Jandarma Commander Selahattin Ugurlu hosted Tezic during his stay in Van.

RADIKAL / OZGUR GUNDEM: DTP (Democratic Society Party) held a meeting and started getting politically organized in Diyarbakir. Co-chairpersons, senior members and many delegates participated in the meeting. DTP Co-Chairperson Aysel Tugluk said that trying to come out with a solution (to the Kurdish issue) without us, without the representatives of the Kurdish people, and without (Kurdish) people is destined to be futile. DTP Co-Chairperson Ahmet Turk said that Kurds must have the right to determine their own fate.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Camiel Eurlings, European Parliament's rapporteur on Turkey, who came to Turkey to attend as an observer to the trial of the author Orhan Pamuk, told a Firat news Agency reporter that their optimism about the reforms made in Turkey was weakening. If this situation continued, our relationships with Turkey will suffer serious problems, said Eurlings. According to Eurling, the Semdinli incident is a really grave problem which should be probed thoroughly; and what they hoped to see in southeastern Turkey was not an environment dominated by a heavy military presence, but one where civilians were in charge in addressing the issues.

OZGUR GUNDEM: The raid conducted on the premise of the Ulkede Ozgur Gundem newspaper (see press summary 12/15) was authorized by the Van Heavy Penaty Court aleedy as part of the Semdinli inestigaion. he Geeral Publication Director of the ewspaprbrandd the raid as a "scandal", ad he frther said tat criminal evidence should be sought for in the offices of JITEM (Jandarma Intelligence), not in a newspaper building.

OZGUR GUNDEM: One of the attorneys of Abdullah Ocalan demanded that Ocalan go through a health check. According to the newspaper, Ocalan is kept in a 13-square-meter-prison-cell and can only go out for one hour per day in the fresh air.

OZGUR GUNDEM: The paper reported that Ali Erol, who was allegedly taken into custody on October 12 during a checkpoint search of a bus in Hakkari, brought to a landfill area, beaten and threatened (see press summary 11/17), was reportedly called to the Jandarma Command after his release and was interrogated by Ali Kaya, one of the defendants of the Semdinli case.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Hundreds of people marched from the Silopi Municipality building to the center of Sirnak's Silopi district to protest the recent bombings in Semdinli. People did not shout any slogans, but only kept silence during the march.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Turkish Armed Forces initiated a large-scale

military operation in Tunceli's Gulec village. Reportedly, 4,000 soldiers are deployed in the area. Tunceli Governor's Office announced that the security forces seized two drums of Kannas rifles, a hand grenade and a backpack, 12 batteries and various other materials during an operation.

CUMHURIYET: Kurdish circles, which are against the PKK, will hold a two-day summit called "Kurdish National Democratic Study Group" tomorrow in Diyarbakir mainly to discuss two issues: the right to self-determination and formation of a federation. It is expected that 250 people will participate in the event to explore new perspectives -- other than the ones the PKK propose -- for resolving the Kurdish issue.

CUMHURIYET: Following the kidnapping of nephews of former Batman deputy from ANAP (Motherland Party) by masked gunmen, hundreds of people raided the local Jandarma Station and demanded the release of the people kidnapped. Jandarma officers reportedly had to convince people that the incident had no links with them.

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